

ANTIQUARIAN NOTES:

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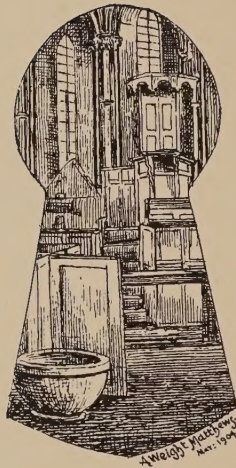
1904.

VOL. III.

PART 26.

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INTERIOR (through Keyhole).



EXTERIOR, 1896.

KIRKSTEAD, ABBEY CHAPEL.

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1904.

VOL. III.

No. 26.

Kirkstead Abbey Chapel.

South of the ruins of Kirkstead Abbey stands this tiny Chapel, an interesting structure dating from the year 1139, and generally regarded as the oldest structure in Lincolnshire. Its early English architecture is worthy any pilgrimage to view it, here at lancet windows in the sides and east end, and over the west door is a "vesica," or ox-eye window. The roof is wondrously groined, the ribs springing from corbel tables. For many years it was covered with thatch, but in 1790 this was removed, and a covering of tiles substituted. At that time also the bell, which had previously hung in a tree, was placed where we now see it, over the west end of the building.

Against the south wall, on the inside, is a rudè stone figure, locally called the "Crusader"; the front part of his helmet is in the shape of a cross. The canopied wooden pulpit, painted white, and dated on its rear 1520, is seen in the annexed sketch, as also the circular stone font, the Communion table, and one of the grace-

ful stone pillars. This sketch has been kindly worked up by Mr. Weight Matthews, from the negative of the photograph taken through the keyhole, by the Editor, at half-past six o'clock on the morning of the 14th August, 1896. Owing, it was said, to misbehaviour in the sacred edifice, by certain ignorant tourists, the owner had screwed up the door, and denied entrance to everyone. However, to Kirkstead I had gone to get a photograph of the interior, and from the Abbey Chapel I returned with one, the value of which the reader may appraise. The Rev. Alx: Gordon, about 1875, was more fortunate than I was; he got inside, and tells us that therein he saw the old register book in a tattered condition, "lying about quite uncared for, and the earlier part torn away, so that no entries by Dr. John Taylor remain. The earliest entry left is dated April 1, 1755, and signed *B. Harrison, Curate*. This was Taylor's immediate successor. The next entry, June 19, 1755, is signed *Andrew Kippis, Curate*, a designation which may surprise some who still venerate the memory of that well-known Presbyterian divine. Nor can I reconcile this date with the received chronology of Kippis's career. Following him is John Dunkly, who is said ('Monthly Repository,' 1813, p. 82) to have succeeded Harrison in 1759, and to have died December 25, 1793. His entries begin Jan. 20, 1761, and end 3 October, 1790." *

* 'Inquirer,' 1885, p. 197.

The Chapel is a donative of exempt jurisdiction, and seems to have had no stipend for the officiating minister, until it came into the hands of Daniel Disney, who, being a Presbyterian, appointed the Rev. John Taylor, D.D., the Hebraist, to perform service there. In 1720, Mr. Disney settled certain lands upon five trustees, the profits of which—£33 per annum—were to be applied to the maintenance of a Presbyterian minister at this Chapel. This gift he afterwards confirmed by his will, in 1732, and, in addition, bequeathed to the trustees the use of the Chapel and burial-ground for the same purpose. On the death or alienation of the minister, the trustees were to present the names of two to the lord of the manor, who was to appoint one of them; and on his neglect, or refusal, the trustees themselves were to make the appointment.

Ministers continued to be nominated by the prescribed form until the death of Mr. Dunkly. On that occasion the owner of the manor, Richard Ellison, M.P. for Lincoln, who had bought the Disney estate, took possession of the Chapel and the trust property, and appointed to the Chapel a minister of the Church of England, paying him £30 per annum. The 'Monthly Repository' says that Ellison got Dunkly's signature to a deed "in a manner of which it will best become us to be silent," and, further, that Dunkly "was scarcely ever seen to smile afterwards." Says Mr. Gordon,*

* 'Inquirer,' 1885, p. 197.

however, "the brutal fact is that Ellison entertained the poor Presbyterian parson too well at dinner, and the signature was obtained when the wine was in and the wit was out. Ellison got a neighbouring clergyman to do duty, and there were no more Presbyterian 'curates.' But in 1806 a legal investigation began, culminating in an action for ejectment, tried in July, 1812, at Lincoln. There were some difficult points in the case; the deed signed by the deluded Dunkly was of course set aside; but there had been irregularity attending the successive appointments of new trustees, and the bell and font were called to prove the parochial character of the ancient edifice." However, the trustees recovered the lands, and a new Chapel was built in the neighbourhood in 1821, where Unitarian worship has since been continuously conducted.

The recovered estate consists of some one hundred and forty acres. A public house also stood on it, known as the "Goose and Gridiron." It has long been closed. In it the half-yearly audit of the "Disney's Charity" was held—the stewardship of which has been for three generations in the same family, that of Woolley, the firm being known as Woolley, Wigram, and Woolley, of Lincoln and Newark.

Worship in the Abbey Chapel has long since been discontinued, the lancet windows boarded up on the outside, and the west door "made" by screwing a strong beam of wood across it.

The rough-leather bound Register of the new Chapel is lettered

Kirkstead Presbyterian Chapel, 1822.

When depositing it in Government custody on the 20th November, 1837, the minister, the Rev. Griffith Roberts, wrote in it—

*Samuel Solly and William Garfitt, Esquires, Trustees.
After a diligent enquiry, I have not been able to procure
any information respecting the Register of the old Kirk-
stead Presbyterian Chapel.*

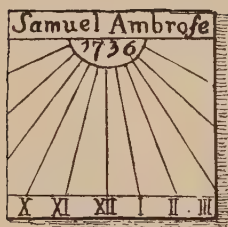
Its first entry, on 4th June, 1822, is by the Rev. James Hawkes. From the 11th November, 1827, to the 6th August, 1836, the entries are signed by *Richard Wright, P.D.M.*, and the last in the book, on the 2nd October, 1836, by *Elam Crisp, P.D.M.*, who probably did temporary duty between the death (16th Sept., 1836) of Wright and the appointment of Roberts.

The present minister, the venerable and venerated Rev. Robert Holden, a few weeks since celebrated his eighty-first birthday, and the forty-sixth anniversary of his appointment to the pastorate of the Chapel. At the service fittingly held on the occasion, the sermon was preached by the Rev. Thomas Lord, Congregational minister, who, being ninety-six years old, looks upon his brother Holden as but a juvenile to him. Mr. Holden's son is the Rev. Alfred Müller-Holden; his son-in-law was the Rev. Edgar Solly Anthony, M.A., "a friend of mine who lives in God."

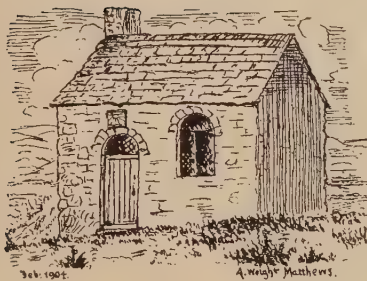
G.E.E.

Bettws, Glamorganshire.

The dissenting interest in Bettws had its genesis in the neighbouring parish of Llangynwyd, where Samuel Jones, M.A., sometime Fellow and Tutor of Jesus College, Oxford, was ejected from his living under the Act of Uniformity (1662). Of the two congregations which Mr. Jones formed in consequence of this event, one met at Brynllwarch (the minister's house), and the other at Cildeudy, both being in all probability largely composed of Presbyterians. Cildeudy was a farm building in the southern division of Llangynwyd parish, and was regularly used for public worship at least as early as 1669, though it was not licensed until 1772. After Mr. Jones's death in 1697, it was probably the only dissenting meeting-house in the locality, which may serve to explain the fact that, some twenty years later, the congregation was so numerous that it was deemed desirable to divide. One section accordingly established itself at Bridgend, while the other erected the little chapel in Bettws which is now in ruins, long known by the name of "City." It is interesting to note that among the articles of furniture removed to the new building was a screen bearing the date of migration from Cildeudy. Does this venerable relic still survive? It witnessed the devotions of five gene-



SUNDIAL, 1901.



Feb. 1901.

A. Wright Matthews.

EXTERIOR, 1880.

BETTWS CHAPEL, GLAMORGANSHIRE.

rations, and probably outlived the solitary Unitarian* who constituted the congregation a quarter of a century ago.

Bettws and Bridgend remained in association as long as the former continued to exist, enjoying the services of the same pastors, and passing from Calvinism into Unitarianism by the same stages—marked in some cases, there is reason to fear, by scenes of disorder. Arminianism first reveals itself in 1763, on the occasion of the withdrawal of the Rev. Lewis Jones, when the pulpit was offered to Thomas Morgan, of Delf, and earlier of Henllan, as to whose views on Predestination we have conclusive evidence in the following extract from his unpublished Diary (Nov. 26, 1766):—

“I have always tho’t it my duty to offer a free salvation to all sinners, and to assure ’em yt none of ’em are excluded but such as exclude themselves by rejecting Jesus Christ, and yt I cannot at all believe yt God made men purposely to damn ’em for ever, and yt I can’t think any mere man capable of it, was it in his power; and surely God exceeds every man in benevolence, &c.”

Mr. Jones’s actual successor, Evan Williams, could hardly have been less heterodox; and when he, after a pastorate of 14 years, relinquished his pulpit for Daniel Gronow’s at Bala, one of the first ministers invited to

* David James, Pandy, d. 3 Oct., 1882, æt. 90. A remarkable man; maternal grandson of John Bradford, who “was sworn Churchwarden, in April, 1758, for Bettws, at Cowbridge.”—G.E.E.

fill the vacancy was the Arian, Arthur Lloyd, of Pudsey. But that the members were much divided in their opinions on this as on later occasions is tolerably clear from the following passage in a letter from Morgan Thomas, Gwernygerwn, to his brother, the Henllan diarist, in February, 1783 :—

“ Give my service to Mr. Lloyd . . . and tell him that they are there [at Bridgend] so far in sittle [unsettled] on their pastor as they was when he was there.”

The appointment of Samuel Price in 1783 did not heal the divisions, for in 1790 a number of the Bettws members seceded, to form the Independent church which now meets at Bethesda. About 17 years later, when the pulpit was again vacant, further troubles arose. It is indeed said that the sole surviving trustee of the chapel property, Walter Coffin [1732—1812], influenced by his son of the same name (M.P. for Cardiff, 1852-57), used his authority to enforce an advanced theology on an unwilling congregation. What is certain is that even in 1816 the bulk of the members were not ripe for the teaching of John James, who was a Unitarian of the Priestley school ; and he accordingly abandoned his charge in despair. His immediate predecessor was an Arian.

The following is the full succession of ministers during the pre-Unitarian period. All of them, except the first two, were trained at Caermarthen College.

1. Samuel Jones, M.A., [1662]—1697.
2. Rees Price, 1697—1739.
3. Lewis Jones, [1740]—1763.
4. Evan Williams, 1766—1780.
5. Samuel Price, 1783—1806.
6. William Rees, 1808—1814.

Feb. 20, 1904.

WALTER J. EVANS.

To these valuable notes by Principal Evans, the following are added by the Editor, who, when preaching at Newcastle Chapel, Bridgend, last January, took the opportunity of walking over the mountain to see Bettws Chapel. The four walls, the roof, and the carved sun-dial over the door, are all that remain of the building. The door has gone, so too have the windows; part of a settle or bench is still inside, as if mutely appealing to be carried away; of the screen not a vestige is to be seen. Worship was conducted here during the ministry of the Rev. Rees Cribin Jones; the faithful and "solitary Unitarian," Mr. James, of Pandy, bore his personal testimony to the end of his life on this earth, and never missed attending the "Bettws service."

The list of ministers may be continued with the names of—

7. John James, 1816—1818.

[He is described as "of Bridgend" in 1817, and "min. of Bridgend" in Midsummer, 1816 (as well as of Bettws and Gellionen). Up to Janu-

ary, 1816, he is described as "of Cardiganshire." This marks, with sufficient clearness, the beginning of his Glamorganshire ministry.]

8. John Edward Jones.

[Cf. 'Monthly Repository,' 1821, p. 317, with 1822, p. 64, where he preaches, December, 1821, at a Quarterly Meeting, and is described as "of Bridgend." He was first editor of 'Yr Ymofynydd,' September, 1847, to June, 1865, and was succeeded in that office by his friend and associate at the Bridgend Academy, 1843—1850, David Lewis Evans, who, on Wednesday, 28th February, 1866, read the Burial Office over his old friend's body, at the Caermarthen Cemetery. In his last letter to him, dated from Bridgend, 2nd January, 1866, he says:—

Dear Evans,—I continue very poorly and very weak. Even writing is an effort. We shall be glad to see you here any time after this (tempestuous) week. Mr. Rees Jones, student, is to preach here on Sunday, and expected to come early in the week. With his assistance, I will send you the particulars you refer to regarding the 'Ymofynydd.' The price of paper is reduced since the 'Ymofynydd' was set on foot. You had better ask for an estimate from some of the Caermarthen printers. Instead of appending my name to the others, I have preferred appending a note, which, in my opinion, will be more in accordance with the tone and wording of my valedictory address. I trust you agree with me. Mrs. J.'s health, I regret to say, is very indifferent.

With our united kind regards to Mrs. Evans and yourself, dear Evans, truly yours,

John E. Jones.

A short time before his own passing, in 1902, the attention of Professor Evans, then in his 90th year, was drawn to a statement that he had been for some time co-pastor with John E. Jones at Bridgend. His emphatic answer was, "Never, I was but an assistant to my venerable friend, both in his Academy and his pulpit duties at Newcastle and Bettws. After a while the Academy passed entirely into my hands, and when I went to Colyton, numbers of the boys followed me there. Some years afterwards I regularly supplied Newcastle Chapel, of which I am the senior trustee. Occasionally, even then —(circa 1871-74)—I gave a service at Bettws Chapel : about four or five came."]

9. Rees Cribin Jones, 1868—1871.

Supplied occasionally by Professor Evans, 1871—1874, and Titus Lloyd, 1875—1878.

In Professor Evans's unpublished diaries are references to Bettws Chapel:—

Sunday, 8 April, 1849. Heard Mr. Jones preach in the morning, at Newcastle. I went to Bettws in the afternoon, where I met Mr. D. James; he read the 103rd Psalm, and the first chapter of the Hebrews. We made some remarks upon them. I engaged in prayer. Went with James to his house at Pandy, to take tea. Saw Middleton's version of the Psalms of David in verse; an old copy presented to his grandfather by Lewis Morris, of Penbryn, in Cardiganshire. In the evening read at Mr. Jones's house Iolo Morganwg's*

* I saw this book on the 16th May, 1904, penes Owen, s. of D. James.—G.E.E.

Manuscripts, presented to the Bridgend Institution by Mr. Harding.

Sunday, 22 April. In the afternoon went to Bettws ; it was wet. Mr. D. James met me at Betsen's house, where he read Isai. 58, and part of the Epistle of James. I engaged in prayer.*

Sunday, 29 July. Went to Bettws in the afternoon. Mr. Evan Evans accompanied me. Met David James. I read the 25th of Matthew, and prayed. In the evening corrected 'Ymofynydd' for the press.

Sunday, 20 January, 1850. In chapel in the morning, Mr. Jones preached from Mark iv. 21. Went to Bettws in the afternoon, nobody there. The place is quite deserted, and no wonder !

For biographies of Nos. 2—5 in above list, see in the order here given, Rees and Thomas's 'Hanes Eglwysi Annibynol Cymru,' Vol. ii., 205, 206, Vol. i., 406, Vol. ii., 207, 144 ; also Jones's 'Geiriadur.' For No. 6, see Jones's 'Llangeler a Phenboyr,' p. 315, and R.J.J., 'Unitarian Students.' But there are errors in all, and some of them serious.

The Rev. David Rees is now the energetic minister of the Newcastle and Bettws trust, and conducts divine service weekly at Bridgend.

* Most faithful of chapel keepers ; lived to a great age.—G.E.E.

